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EPA REGION VIII
SUPERFUND BRANCH

June 26, 2003

Mr. Victor Ketellapper
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region VIII
999 18th Street, Suite 500
Denver, CO 80202-2466

RE: "A New Proposed Cleanup Plan. Cleaning Up Residential Soils within the Vasquez Boulevard & Interstate 70 Superfund Site (VB/I-70)), Denver, Colorado, dated May 2003."

Dear Mr. Ketellapper:

Thank you for the opportunity to review EPA's revised Proposed Plan for arsenic and lead in soil at the Vasquez Boulevard/I-70 (VB/I-70) site, that was mailed to community members in early June, 2003. We have the following comments, some of which echo our comments on EPA's draft proposed plan of May 2002:

1. We support EPA's preferred cleanup alternative #6 that includes: 1) soil sampling for properties not yet sampled, 2) soil removal and replacement for properties with arsenic greater than 70 ppm and lead greater than 400 ppm, and 3) the implementation of a community health program. We strongly agree with EPA's suggestion that the community health program is especially important because it addresses concerns that exist until the soil cleanup is complete, and because it provides for strategies to reduce children's exposures to lead and/or arsenic from all sources, and not just contaminated soil. We provide additional comments on the community health program below.
2. DEH also supports EPA's proposal to perform non-time critical removal actions to "...clean the worst first." (i.e., properties with concentrations of lead greater than 540 ppm and/or concentrations of arsenic greater than 240 ppm). Given the total number of properties that require cleanup and likely federal budget constraints, it is important that properties with higher levels of contamination are prioritized for cleanup. We understand that these non-time critical removals may start as soon as later this summer.
3. We are concerned regarding the potential for insufficient funding available for cleanups from the Superfund trust fund. We encourage EPA Region VIII to make every effort to ensure funding for remedial activities at the VB/I-70 site, including expediting decisions that may increase the opportunity for funding. We appreciate efforts that have already been undertaken by EPA in this regard.

4. We wish to emphasize the importance of good construction practices during the soil cleanup actions. As EPA is aware, it is important to minimize tracking out of soil and the generation of fugitive dusts, as well as performing construction activities in as safe a manner as possible. We have been informed in Working Group meetings that EPA is using contractual provisions to promote a safe and low risk cleanup operation; we encourage EPA to continue this stated approach to the cleanup process. Denver has several city ordinances addressing construction activities (track out, fugitive dusts, etc.). We expect that the substantive portions of these ordinances will be observed. If EPA is not aware of the provisions of these ordinances, please contact our office for assistance.
5. The proposed plan states EPA's intent to expand sampling into the area south and west of the convergence of Blake and Downing streets. The proposed plan does not explicitly state that property owners in the expanded area will be offered soil cleanups, if their soil is identified as being elevated in lead and/or arsenic. The Record of Decision must clarify that properties in the expanded sampling area will be subject to the provisions of the proposed plan in the same manner as the rest of the VB/I-70 site, including soil cleanups and the community health plan. (DEH has previously provided additional comments on the expanded sampling effort in a letter to EPA, dated May 23, 2003. EPA should consider following the recommendations contained in those comments.)
6. As we stated in our previous comments on the draft proposed plan, DEH strongly supports the implementation of a community health program for lead and arsenic, as part of the VB/I-70 site remedy. The community health program can provide numerous benefits to this community. These include:
 - a. Most importantly, the community health program will help prevent children's exposures before they occur, through education and outreach activities. The program should be designed to minimize children's exposures to lead and arsenic, by raising awareness of potential harm, providing community education on ways to reduce exposure, and facilitating behavioral and environmental changes that minimize exposure.
 - b. Minimizing potential exposures during the timeframe in which the remedy is being implemented, but is not yet complete.
 - c. Addressing environmental justice concerns regarding exposure to environmental contaminants. Especially for lead, it is well documented that there are multiple potential sources of exposure, including deteriorated lead-based paint, the predominant source of exposure for most children. The community health program is essential to identify children at risk from all sources of lead, including sources other than soil.
 - d. Ensuring that community members are appropriately tested for exposure to the contaminants of concern.
 - e. Ensuring that community members with elevated levels of exposure are provided with appropriate follow-up investigation, referral, and mitigation.
 - f. Ensuring that the community becomes an integral component of ensuring that a protective remedy is implemented.
 - g. Identifying and providing interventions for children exhibiting pica behavior. Typically, pica children require additional interventions than provided by a simple

soil removal program. This is because they are at risk for health effects from contaminants such as lead in soil, even at urban background levels.

- h. Verification of remedy effectiveness. It is important to collect data on remedy effectiveness to ensure that a protective remedy has been selected. Data can be evaluated periodically to address community concerns regarding the protectiveness of the remedy. At a minimum, the data can be used during the five-year review process.
7. We agree that education, biomonitoring, and response are essential to the success of a community health program. It is critical that the community health program be community-based. Community members must be involved and be integral in the design and implementation of the program. The education and outreach efforts should be community-based, culturally-appropriate, flexible, sustainable, and implemented by community members whenever possible. For example, the educational effort could include an outreach effort staffed by community lay health workers that are trained and paid a stipend, to contact their neighbors providing health messages in the manner most appropriate to the target audience (verbally, written materials, hands-on demonstrations, etc.).

Also, the program must be flexible, because the approach used in one neighborhood may not be appropriate for another neighborhood. For example, in some communities it may be decided that a mass media campaign (e.g., television, radio) would meet program goals, but in another an outreach effort in the churches or schools might work better. The community health program should be flexible enough to accommodate and encourage different approaches for different communities.

8. The community health program must be of sound design and contain sustainable elements, that provide a measurable community health benefit. The program must include performance goals, so that the success of the program can be judged. Performance goals should be set for things like measures of hazard awareness, numbers of successful contacts made, and participation rates in biomonitoring events. The health program must have a comprehensive and sound design to ensure sustainability and effectiveness, and so progress towards these goals can be measured.
9. If elevated cases of exposure are identified from biomonitoring activities, each must be investigated individually, to ascertain the source of exposure. In Denver, DEH already performs investigations for children with elevated blood lead levels. Investigations conducted for cases identified within the VB/I70 site should follow similar protocols, be documented appropriately, and be coordinated with DEH. DEH has responsibility for management of elevated blood lead cases in Denver, and wishes to ensure that cases identified through site biomonitoring activities are investigated and managed appropriately. This is important because individual cases may require management by DEH, even after a VB/I-70 health program is discontinued.
10. In the proposed plan, EPA has stated their desire to recognize the needs of the community as they relate to environmental justice, and to involve community members in the design and implementation of the community health program. DEH supports this sentiment and

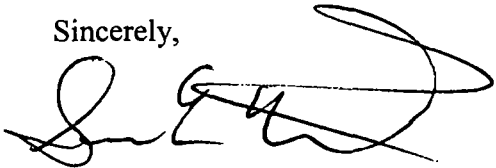
encourages EPA to increase their efforts to be responsive to community needs and address other potential sources of health concern, in whatever avenues are available.

For example, in the past EPA has stated that it is important to understand cumulative health risks for affected communities in the VB/I-70 area. As described by EPA, a critical component to understanding environmental health risk in an environmental justice community would include the collection and evaluation of additional data to identify and target the largest contributors to health risks for residents. We encourage EPA to perform such an evaluation, given environmental justice concerns, and the cumulative risks likely present for site residents from things other than arsenic and lead in soil.

11. In the proposed plan, EPA has suggested the possibility of disposing of removed soils at the neighboring Asarco Globe Plant site in Globeville. This option needs to be thoroughly investigated prior to implementation, and must only be undertaken with adequate involvement of the local community and local government. For example, the large number of trucks might present an additional traffic burden on a segment of the Globeville community that it might not otherwise experience.
12. The text for alternative 6 states a rationale for the new alternative that involves consistency with action levels implemented "... at the adjacent Globeville Superfund site". To be accurate, Asarco Globe was not listed as a federal Superfund site; Globeville residents received soil removals under a State-mediated Consent Degree. Actions taken in the Globeville neighborhood do not necessarily apply to the federally-designated VB/I-70 site.
13. Even though local drought conditions have been somewhat alleviated this year, we applaud EPA's statements that they will offer residents a xeriscape landscaping option, for properties requiring soil removal and replacement. Not only will this reduce water use, but will help ensure that soil cover remains in place even during any future drought conditions. Soil cover is important to reduce windblown fugitive dust, even for clean replacement soil.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. If you have any questions, please contact Celia VanDerLoop at 720 865-5458, or me at 720 865-5469.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gene C. Hook', with a large, stylized flourish extending from the end of the signature.

Gene C. Hook
Environmental Protection Division

cc: VB/I70 Working Group